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CHRISTIAN CORNELISSEN

Libertarian Communism in the Twentieth Century



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International Movement



Book Review:

Laski's "The State in Theory and Practice"



Editorials

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Modern Weapons Against Modern Counter-Revolution

Up to the triumph of the forces of savagery in Germany, it was generally held that counter-revolutions came only as reactions to highly developed revolutionary situations. Only when revolutionary movements attain sufficient strength to shake the foundations of the existing social order, failing on the other hand to culminate in a successful revolution, do counter-revolutions step in to restore the balance of a disturbed social mechanism. It was further believed that, violently as such reactions might swing to the right, they could not thwart for a very long time the forward course of our civilization toward a higher form of society. Being but the negative reflection of revolutionary commotions, they inevitably lose their stranglehold upon social life with the dying down of the disturbing effect of revolutionary upheavals.

The German catastrophe, however, revealed another possibility of a much more ominous type of counter-revolution. It showed that modern reactions possess a spontaneous power of their own and are not moved along by the reflected power of revolutionary commotions. Our rapidly disintegrating social system generates forces which must find their outlet by smashing the progressive features of our social order. They must inevitably follow the line of their ultimate drive — and that is the barbarization of the entire field of social relations. Whether whipped along by powerful revolutionary commotions, exasperating the ruling classes into the betrayal of their liberal traditions, or whether left unchallenged by any militant revolutionary movement,—but formidable counter-revolutions are on the order of the day in every country.

Not only do those modern counter-revolutions possess a spontaneous power of their own, but they have tapped a new source of power by mobilizing the forces of popular discontent growing apace with the sharpening of the economic crisis. The old classic counter-revolution was confined to the powerful and rich. The modern type, while serving the same interests even more faithfully, has found a way to ingratiate itself with the humble and poor, with the downtrodden and most cruelly exploited sections of the population. It evolved a technique enabling it to utilize the immense

energies of the mass revolt — that tremendous dynamic force of class resentment at the injustice of life which always constituted the potential field of strength for any revolutionary movement.

The German counter-revolution was the first in its successful attempt to divert and direct along channels of social atavism this erstwhile revolutionary force. It did not do it knowingly, it did not have any preconceived plan, it stumbled upon it in the course of its struggle with the socialist and Communist movements. It was upon the discovery of the impotence of both, of their lack of revolutionary daring, of their failure to meet the crying need of the situation for a vigorous action with a correspondingly revolutionary program, — it was only when the reactionary forces discovered this fatal weakness that they began to challenge the radical movement upon its own territory. They drew in the unemployed, the poor farmers, the unskilled, unorganized workers on the promise of immediate, effective action, thus effecting for a very short time a link-up between the interests of the most outspoken reactionaries and a demagogically inflated mass movement.

That points clearly the way for the most effective manner of fighting the ominous forces of counter-revolution now gathering momentum in other countries. The revolutionary forces must forestall any attempt on the part of the former to add to their ordinary strength the immense power of mass revolt. The mood for action on the part of the discontented masses of population must be given revolutionary expression. The answer to fascist demagoguery must not be an appeal to prudence, but to greater revolutionary daring. It is not just by ridiculing the fantastic social plans, cooked up by irresponsible fascist demagogues of the Huey Long type for the obvious purpose of misleading the masses of people, that we can gain support with those millions of oppressed who are looking for some plan of action, fantastic as it may sound. It is by opposing to it a resolute plan of our own, that we can deflate a demagogic movement. A plan of action, and not just mere theory, a plan of resolute attack upon the foundations of the capitalist society and not just pottering with some petty reforms or just fighting for wage increases.

The spontaneous swelling on of the demagogic mass movements is in itself an indication of some craving for action on the part of the masses. And lest the radical movement of other countries repeat the fatal error of the German Socialists and Communists of underestimating the mood of the masses, they will have to keep well in mind the counsel given by Danton to the revolutionaries of his time: "What we need is daring, daring and more daring".

S—X

Relief for Big Business

By his latest pronouncement regarding the scale of relief wages, the President has again endeared himself to the chambers of commerce, with whom he had a verbal tilt only a few weeks ago. The scale could hardly be made more pleasing to the large industrialists and financiers who are delighted in seeing this reservoir of labor employed at semi-starvation wages. With such a lever at their command they can now start a general course of wages reduction. The difference between what the President says and what the President does has never, throughout the whole course of New Deal legislation, been so sharply drawn as it is now. The liberal and populist phraseology coming from Washington has been cast aside for the moment and substituted with a concrete plan to impoverish the great mass of American labor as surely as it is being done by the Fascists of Italy and Germany.

The creation of such a labor reserve army on semi-starvation wages and under government control is a step in the further fascization of American life. From a drain on American industry, the unemployed become a stepping stone to greater profits. American labor can now bid farewell to its present standard of living — especially so if it remains to be represented by the American Federation of Labor. The latter organization, true enough, has officially decried this attack on the standard of living of its members. On the other hand it is also backing the Wagner Bill because the bill outlaws company unions which the A. F. of L. has not even the vitality to combat effectively. They are not concerned with the bill's provisions in regard to strikes — a perfect complement to the Roosevelt wage scale policy. Industry can now safely cut wages and be secured against the threats of a strike by its control of the various courts and labor boards.

With their present organization and leadership, the unemployed and the employed can hardly be expected to defend themselves against these policies. The American Federation of Labor is unwilling and incapable of giving direction to a movement linking up the unemployed with the employed. Such a task can only be undertaken by a revolutionary leadership. A revolutionary unionism must arise that will defend the right to strike and not bargain it in exchange for the outlawing of company unions. It is the hope of industrialists and financiers to reap greater profits from the present situation by means of this new wage differential. It should be the aim of labor to close this gap through united action. Contrary to the present attitude of the A. F. of L., it is a militant coordinated program between employed and unemployed that should be the cornerstone of American labor's policy. A course which sacrifices the unemployed, instead of raising their standard of living, will inevitably lead to labor's ruination.

—R. W.

Libertarian Communism in the Twentieth Century

By CHRISTIAN CORNELISSEN.

EDIT. NOTE: The emergence of the anarcho-syndicalist movement of Spain as a first-rate revolutionary power brought to the foreground the question of working out a constructive program for the libertarian movement. A powerful organization like the C. N. T., which may soon be placed in the position of responsibility, cannot confine itself to slogans of a mere negative nature. It has to envisage the problems of revolutionary construction for the very near future. And what faces the anarchist movement of Spain as a present day actuality may emerge as such in the not too distant future for the libertarian movement of other countries where the bankruptcy of the authoritarian communists is bound to result in an active effort to solve the revolutionary problems along the road of libertarian communism.

We therefore welcome the attempt made by comrade Cornelissen to place the problem of a constructive libertarian program before the attention of our movement. Not being in full agreement with all the tenets of comrade Cornelissen, (thus we believe the idea of functional decentralization is not sufficiently emphasized, while the idea of communal (territorial) autonomy is given a much too preponderant place in his political scheme, leading as it does to the idea of national independence with the dangerous and non-anarchistic implications of national sovereignty), we still believe that the presentation of his views is of timely interest to all those who wish to see the rebirth of a vigorous libertarian movement based upon a realistic approach to the problems of revolutionary struggle and reconstruction. In our coming issues we shall take up those very issues at greater length trying to bring before the readers the opinions of outstanding leaders of libertarian thought.

During the first forty years of its existence, libertarian propaganda was distinguished by its strictly negative character. The anarchists declared themselves *against* the state, *against* Religion and Church, *against* Capitalism, and likewise against all forms of domination over the working masses by the representatives of the three above mentioned powers. They were anti-parliamentarian, anti-reformist, anti-syndicalist and in fact against all organization. In a word, they were more or less "anti-everything".

During this period they adopted the terroristic methods of the Russian nihilists upheld in western Europe by the propaganda of men like Bakunin and for a time by men like Elisee Reclus and Peter Kropotkin*.

* It is well known though that during the last few years of his life Kropotkin worked in Dmitrov on a constructive project of social organization, based on the principles of federalism and modern revolutionary syndicalism.

In western Europe this period of basically negative propaganda reached its highest point at the time of the individualist terrorist acts of 1893-94 and the "trial of the thirty" in Paris. I recall having been present during this period at meetings where comrades seriously discussed the question of whether it was right to have a chairman at an anarchist meeting** and whether the whole idea of definite organization was not a violation of individual liberty.

But, we began to observe that after several decades of negative propaganda, even our most ardent comrades were beginning to ask for positive measures and constructive propaganda. The latter, they complained, was being monopolized by the social-democrats and the cooperative movement. Anarchist journals were gradually losing their readers; sales of pamphlets decreased.

At the beginning of the twentieth century it was noted that the interest of the man on the street in anarchism had begun to wane. He would say that it mattered little that the anarchists were against everything; he wanted to know what they were for . . .

The highpoint of this negative period was reached prior to the outbreak of the World War. It was, however, the war, its aftermath and the Russian Revolution which administered the "coup de grace" to this type of propaganda. Although necessary at the beginning of our movement, negative propaganda had gradually become an obstacle to its further development. The World War, the Russian Revolution and the advent of Fascism in Italy, Germany, Poland and Hungary have demonstrated to all those whose eyes were open to realities that we must have at our command strongly organized forces directed toward a well defined goal, if we are to achieve anything of lasting human value. The present world crisis has added the finishing touches to the lessons already learned by revealing to us the basic forces in society which cannot be combatted by sheer visions and dreams of a far off world to come.

While cleaving to the basic ideal of liberty, the libertarian communists have been obliged to accept the principle of the necessity of local, national and international organization. In these organizations they still maintain the principle of free federation, the autonomy of various groups in their local propaganda, and the liberty of individuals in the groups themselves as long as this liberty does not interfere with the activities of the other members or of the whole group. Likewise, concerning social life in general and the carrying out of any economic or political act, the modern libertarian communist defends the liberty of each individual in actions which concern him or her alone. He also defends the autonomy of communes and regions in any action which is not incompatible with the needs of national and international life. Finally, he defends the liberty of each nation to govern itself as a part of the United Nations of the World.

**It is still done in this country.

The libertarian communists of Europe have declared themselves against all forms of fascism—red, black or brown. All dictatorships in effect become social systems directed from above, founded on the exploitation and militarization of the working masses. The libertarian communists favor a democratic order directed from the bottom up, in which each individual maintains his liberty of thought and action.

The modern libertarian communists have, in the sphere of economics, broken definitely with the principle, formerly so popular in our movement, of the free association of small groups of comrades toiling as artisans in industry or tilling the soil with spade and pick-axe. They do not want to go back to the Middle Ages.

They realize that the methods of the hand craftsman can be used today only in a very few industries, such as the production of some luxury articles or in repair work. In agriculture the old methods can be used only for some forms of horticulture, truck gardening and the higher grades of vine culture.

The modern libertarians recognize all the advantages of modern machine methods; they detest the miseries of the old fashioned domestic labor. They realize that in the production of articles of major importance (coal, iron, steel, oil, rubber paper, glass, lumber, cereals, cotton, wool, silk, etc.) the growth of large scale industry is inevitable; it is a necessary concomitant of technological progress.

As long as men want to live decently, to be well fed, well clothed and properly housed, as long as everybody wants to make use of rapid means of communication, it becomes necessary to produce consumption goods in mass quantities and to organize our life in such a complex fashion which makes the satisfaction of the needs of the community utterly beyond the reach of small associations of artisans.

If everybody wants to travel and to go to the movies, it will be necessary to construct railways, street cars and automobiles and to produce films.

The task of the destruction of the present social order is being performed for the most part by the present system itself; the narrow egoism, the errors and the crimes of the capitalists are doing this work. The real test for us revolutionaries will come afterwards when we shall inherit the disorder and misery left to us and shall have to construct the new world.

Since the working masses are at present nowhere quite ready (technologically) to undertake the management of industries—especially large-scale and medium-sized industries—the modern libertarian communists have united with the revolutionary syndicalists in an attempt to effect as soon as possible cooperation between workers and technicians in learning how to manage the industries in which they work. This will be an indispensable training school for the organization of the technical cadres, which in the future

will have to take over the management of the expropriated industries.

Inasmuch as they are communists (in the broad sense of the term—ed.) the modern libertarians insist more than ever before upon the necessity of socialized property.

The society following our present capitalist order will also be based upon the commune, i. e. upon urban and rural municipalities, and in modern countries all land and houses will become social property, to be administered by the commune.

The commune will have an ample supply of the resources necessary to fill the storehouses of the regional and national administrations, to guarantee to all the inhabitants of their respective territories the prime necessities of life (food, working clothes and lodging will be given free to everybody) and to undertake the education of children and the upkeep of hospitals, scientific and cultural institutions, museums, etc.

Land and houses having become communal property, lent to the inhabitants who will pay no rent or taxes for them, it will be impossible for those who have hoarded money to invest it in real estate or to lend money for interest, because credit will be free under the control of the commune.

In the political sphere, the defects of parliamentarism have been amply revealed in all modern nations. Although the political system may vary from country to country, it seems that, for the most part, it will take the form of a National Assembly of Producers working together with and checked by a Congress of Consumers. The make-up of the former can indeed be modeled after the "soviets" as they were functioning in Russia before the Communist Party distorted them by its party monopoly. The representatives to the Congress of Consumers will be elected by all adult inhabitants of the country, male and female, who were born there or have lived there a specified length of time.



The Historic Role of the State

By VOLIN

Comrade Volin is one of the most prominent figures of the Russian anarchist movement. He took an active part in the struggles of the Makhno movement, having directed the cultural work of the Makhno Army. The editor of a number of anarchist publications, he is at the present time an active collaborator of Sebastien Faure in the gigantic work of issuing the "Encyclopedie Anarchiste." (An Anarchist Encyclopedia in French).

According to the bourgeois sociologists the historic role of the state consists in organizing society, in giving order to the inter-relations of groups and individuals, in regulating the entire social life. This is, according to their view, what makes the state not

only a useful, but a necessary institution: the only one capable of securing order, progress and civilization for society. The role of the state was and still continues to be progressive and positive in its nature.

This point of view is shared by the state socialists, "communists" included. They, too, attributed to the state a constructive role in the course of human history. And this is maintained by them in spite of the gulf separating them from the state partisans of the bourgeois camp. The gulf is of the following nature: while the latter consider the state as an institution placed above the classes, called upon to reconcile their antagonisms, the socialists and communists maintain that the state is nothing but the instrument of domination and dictatorship of one class. In spite of this difference the socialists also maintain that from the view of the general evolution of mankind, the advent of the state was a progressive feature, a necessity, having organized the chaotic life of the primitive communities and having thus opened up new outlets for civilization. In conformity with this conception of the state as an instrument of organization, of progress (under certain conditions), the socialists also maintain that the state system can be utilized even now as an instrument of emancipation of the oppressed and exploited classes. It is necessary that in some way the present bourgeois state be replaced by the "proletarian state" which is going to be an instrument of domination of the proletariat over the bourgeois and capitalist elements.

According to the bourgeois ideologists, the role of the state is a constructive and progressive one. But to the socialists this role was progressive only at the beginning; and then it became regressive. The state (like the principle of authority) can, according to them, be an instrument of progress or reaction. All depends upon the given historical conditions. In any case the state, we are told, did fulfill, and is still capable of fulfilling, a constructive role: that of organizing the social life and laying the basis for a better society.

This point of view is conditioned by the Marxist conception of human society, of social organization, of social progress—a conception which is "mechanical" to a certain degree. Such a conception does not take sufficiently in view the creative forces to be found in a potential state within each and every human community, the members of which—that is the individuals—are the vehicles of creative energy. It is such energies which secure and realize true progress of humanity.

Not taking this into consideration, conceiving life and activity in a purely mechanical sense, the socialists cannot therefore conceive the organization, order, evolution and progress of humanity in any other manner but as the intervention and the constant activity of a powerful mechanical factor—the state.

The anarchist conception is based exactly upon the spirit and

the energy of the creative process which they believe is within the reach of every human being and every collective group. It denies altogether the mechanical factor, it deems it of no value, of no usefulness at any historical moment, past, present or future.

Hence follows the altogether different anarchist conception of the historical role of the state.

1) Never did the state fulfill any progressive, constructive role. Human society, having started in the form of free communities, had before it the direct course of a free creative evolution. This evolution would certainly have been infinitely richer, more splendid and rapid had its normal course not been checked and shunted off by the coming of the State. The free activity of the creative energies would have led to a social organization incomparably better and more beautiful than the one to which the state led us. The general course of this normal progress was already assuming definite outline when certain natural causes, which now are no longer in existence, brought about wars, the reign of military authority, the establishment of the institution of private property, the historic role of the state.

The coming of the latter was therefore nothing but a detour, a backward step. The State then was a part of a complex of deteriorating factors, of monopoly and social regression.

2) Once established, it began to affirm itself in a series of triumphant struggles against the free community. And since then the state has been carrying on and deepening its destructive role. It was the State that brought humanity to the present condition of bestial existence. It was the State which mechanized all human life, falsified its progress, blocked the course of its evolution, stifled its creative growth. And it is this institution with the help of which Lenin and his followers intend to rebuild humanity on new foundations.

For, apart from the above mentioned considerations, we always keep in mind the truth brought forward by Kropotkin and many other impartial historians who proved that the epochs of true progress realized by humanity were always those in which the debilitating power of the state was reduced to the minimum. While on the contrary, the periods of the expansion of the state were those in which the creative progress of human society was on the point of vanishing.

All the above reasons lead us to formulate certain essential anarchist views on the State.

The State is a passing form of human society destined to disappear sooner or later.

Other forms of social organization free from any element of exploitation are bound to take its place.

The State will never disappear by way of evolution. It has to be abolished by revolution, in the same manner as capitalism.

The means of struggle against the State are the same as those employed against capitalism.

The abolition of capitalism only and the replacement of the bourgeois State by a "proletarian State" is an utopia—it is an absurdity.

The State can never be anything but bourgeois and exploiting in its nature. It is of no use in the true struggle for emancipation.

VOLIN.



For an Anarchist Policy in the Trade Unions

EDITOR'S NOTE: *What is wrong with our movement? Why is it so weak as to be scarcely a force in the growing class struggles of today? This is what we shall attempt to answer in a series of articles dealing with various phases of this failure. In our last issue Comrade S. Morrison raised the problem of youth, pointing out the neglect of this important work as the contributing factor of the abnormal weakness of the anarchist movement of this country. In this article Comrade Weiner draws our attention to another, perhaps even keener aspect of the same failure—and that is the lack of any anarchist policy on the part of those who work in the unions.*

We shall have more articles on the various aspects of the issue, dealing with some of the basic fallacies, inconsistencies and wrong approaches that have prevented the anarchists from occupying their rightful place in the radical movement of this country.

The elementary task of the Anarchist movement is to take an active, militant part in the life of the masses, to radicalize, revolutionize, nurture and encourage the revolutionary tendencies within the mass organizations, especially in the unions which are the vital organs of the masses. The effectiveness of the anarchist movement, its very existence, depends upon the extent to which the movement strikes its roots in mass life. Its effectiveness is contingent upon the degree to which the movement evaluates these revolutionary tendencies and adopts tactics in accordance with the needs of the workers.

The anarchists reject parliamentary action. They believe that the direct action of the mass organizations can overthrow capitalism and build the new society. Contrary to the position of the authoritarian socialists, the anarchists insist that only mass organizations can reorganize society. Furthermore, the domination of these organizations by a centralized authority, state or party, is incompatible with true socialism. This means that the anarchist movement must adopt its own policy in relation to the mass move-

ments and must place a greater emphasis upon mass work than upon political parties.

Because of that the anarchists in the International Work. M. Ass'n.—from the time of Bakunin to the present day—realized the supreme importance of working in mass organizations. They developed a clear anarchist policy, and tactics in the workers organizations. The anarchist movement in America, which flourished in the period of the Chicago Martyrs (1887), played an active part in the unions. It did not lose its identity, but became the center of attraction for the most militant section of the proletariat. The present weakness and chaotic condition of our movement is due to the fact that the movement has left the solid ground of class-struggle and has become enmeshed in the utopian aspects of our ideal. Out of touch with the daily struggles of the masses, the movement is stagnant, is stewing in its own juice. The libertarian tendencies in the labor movement remain uncultivated; the name "anarchist" is either unknown, or what is worse, has come to symbolize a hopeless erratic visionary.

In the unions of the needles trades, as well as in other unions where the Jewish, Italian, Spanish and Russian comrades are influential, we find a most deplorable condition. The anarchists who are of necessity members of the unions are inarticulate. They have completely lost their identity. On every vital question affecting the life of the membership the anarchist position is neither formulated nor stated. Until recently no attempt has been made to initiate discussions or develop clear-cut anarchist policies and tactics in trade union work. Little or no propaganda for anarchism is being conducted in the unions.

The membership of the unions is being mulcted by the bureaucracy of the Socialist Party, the labor fakers, their gangsters and racketeers. The unions of the A. F. of L. are assisting in, and becoming part of the growing policy of fascization of our economic life carried on by the government. Where are the anarchists? What resistance is being put up against them? The anarchists did not even see fit to issue a manifesto exposing the betrayers of the proletariat and calling upon the membership of the corrupt machine to reorganize the unions into true fighting organizations of the workers. What did the anarchists do in order to rally the militants in the unions for a fight against their misleaders?

When the battle between the "socialists" and the "communists" for control of the needle trades took place several years ago, the anarchists had an opportunity to show the workers the validity of their principles and tactics, to give a revolutionary orientation to the movement and point the way out for the confused workers. Because they did not take an independent position and swung their influence to the corrupt officialdom, they unwittingly became a support for the machine politicians. The anarchists were/ be-

wildered, hopelessly confused; they forgot that they were anarchists, they were unprepared ideologically or tactically to attract the militant workers, to give concrete expression to the needs of the rank and file. The above does not apply to the few honorable exceptions who fought, in vain, for an independent, consistent anarchist policy.

There is no more fertile field for the propaganda of anarchism than the labor unions. The dormant libertarian tendencies of the labor movement can be revived to form the bedrock for an effective libertarian movement. There is room for an effective anarchist vanguard which will apply anarchist principles to the problems of the unions. The workers must be made to realize the following facts.

1. The bureaucratic machine of the A. F. of L. must be smashed and the unions must be re-organized on the principles of rank and file control, direct action and workers democracy.

2. The unions are not only an instrumentality for attaining better conditions but must become the mechanisms which will overthrow capitalism and take over production in the new social order.

3. The mass organization must replace the State. Anarchists cannot take sides in the bickerings of politicians, but must expose them. The position of the anarchist must be clearly stated at all times. The lines which mark off the anarchists from the would-be messiahs and the bureaucrats must be sharply drawn. All this cannot, of course, be realized immediately. Nevertheless, the indispensable foundations for a militant movement in the unions must be laid right now. There are:

1. The realization that an anarchist policy in the trade unions is a necessity.

2. Anarchists in each union should form groups, work out policies and tactics for activity in the union, in order to guide them in their work.

3. There should be discussions among the members on the problems of the labor movement in general, and the union in particular.

4. Propaganda of anarchist ideas should be carried on within the unions.

In adopting the principles of anarchism to the unions in a realistic manner, the anarchist ideas will become a vital factor in the labor movement.

—S. WEINER

The International Movement

S P A I N

Since the October revolt the C. N. T. (anarcho-syndicalist unions) has lost none of its syndicates but is on the contrary, strengthening its cadres. This is taking place in spite of the persecutions which compel the movement to function underground most of the time. The Catalanian Regional Federation of the C. N. T. has voluntarily suspended publication of its daily paper "Solidaridad Obrera". This was done because the rigid government censorship prevented them from printing the truth. Rather than print distorted news, it was decided to suspend publication until the freedom of the press was reestablished. (We learn from reliable sources that "Solidaridad Obrera" has resumed publication—Ed.). The Minister of the Interior, Portela Valladéros, has refrained from touching the Socialist Party, and has released their political prisoners. But he has steadfastly refused to free the imprisoned members of the C. N. T. and the F. A. I. (Anarchist Federation of Iberia). During the last few weeks C. N. T. has been intensifying its campaign to reopen its syndicates.

The organization in Zaragossa decided to call a protest against the closing of the syndicates, the censorship and the persecutions of its members. The action developed into a magnificent three day general strike which completely tied up the city. The strike took place during the Easter holidays. The C. N. T. declared, "Either we win, or the Easter parade of the Church, the fascists and the bourgeoisie will not take place." The most ferocious threats of the authorities proved of no avail, the parade did not take place. (As we go to press we learn that many syndicates in Spain have been opened).

After the October events many sections of the U. G. T. (socialist labor unions) joined the Catholic labor unions which were created by the fascistic government of Gil Robles and Lerroux. Thus the Caballero policy of creating government sponsored unions, worked against him when the Republican-Socialist government, in which he was the Minister of Labor, was deposed. Many sections of the U. G. T. merely switched their allegiance from Caballero to Gil Robles, because they wanted to return to the favor of the party in power!

Fernando de los Rios, former minister in the Socialist-Republican government, declared at a May Day meeting in Madrid that in the past seven months, Spain has gone backward 100 years. The Spanish Socialist forget, that the Lerroux-Gil Robles government bases its suppression acts on the legal foundations laid by the socialists when they were in power. *The Law of the Safety of the Republic*, the *Law of Public Order* the *Law of Associations*, etc., etc., were made and enforced by the Socialists. Now the Social-

ists are taking a dose of their own medicine. The laws which they made in order to destroy the C. N. T. and the F. A. I are being invoked against them, though to a lesser extent than they are used against the C. N. T. The future policy of the Socialist party and its recruiting depot, the U. G. T. is foreshadowed in the declaration of one of its leaders, Schevenel, who looks forward to the next elections in the hope that the government will again fall into the hands of the socialists and "return to its old reformist course."

In answer to the expressed determination of the Gil Robles-Lerroux government to wipe out the revolutionary C. N. T. and the F. A. I. the Barcelona federation of the C. N. T. issued a manifesto which contains the following: "The declaration of war by the government will be answered by the powerful organizations of the C. N. T. which will mobilize its cadres for action and for battle. We will not say in advance what our action will be. Our actions will speak for us. Enough of words! To action! Long Live Libertarian Communism!"

GERMANY

Economic conditions in Germany are steadily growing worse. With the exception of the munitions industry, production has fallen off sharply. A general decline in wages, ranging from 7% to 27%, has taken place since the Hitler triumph. In Berlin recently, the service on 37 trolley lines had to be curtailed.

The May 1st parades proved very unsuccessful this year. On that day workers had to report to their shops, to register if they did not wish to lose their day's pay. They were then compelled to parade. Many dropped out during the line of march. In Berlin they paraded with little enthusiasm, while throughout Bavaria the parades could not continue long, because so many workers had walked out during the march.

Just after Hitler came to power, the anarcho-syndicalists held a conference in Central Germany to replace the old executive committee which had been arrested. Later a secret convention was held in South Germany at which almost all of the anarcho-syndicalist organizations were represented. New plans were laid for perfecting the underground organizations and two underground papers were launched — one for South Germany, the "Finale" and another for Central Germany, the "Rebel". These papers and a monthly magazine published abroad, of which six issues have already been smuggled in and distributed, constitute the regularly appearing publications of the movement in Germany. In addition to these, thousands of leaflets and pamphlets, camouflaged with Nazi titles, are being spread. The organization in Berlin recently published a manifesto against war to meet this rising danger.

The Socialists and Communists are putting out propaganda, but find it extremely difficult to keep their organizations intact.

There are innumerable spies in their ranks which impede their work tremendously. In Prague, a newspaper called "The Revolution in Germany" is being published by a former high Nazi official. He has a tremendous following among discontented Storm Troopers. These S. A. men were formerly in charge of the concentration camps, but have been replaced by Hitler's private army, the S. S., now part of the regular army.

MEXICO

*(Excerpts from a letter sent to us by the comrades of
"Voluntad", Mexico, D. F.)*

"Mexico is now in a period of disintegration, which, barring another turn of events, will lead us soon into a fascist regime of the German and Italian type. To be sure, our government is a "workers government", but the entire list of laws enacted for the alleged purpose of defending and safeguarding the interests of the workers is, when you examine it closely, but the greatest obstacle upon the workers' road towards a full emancipation. Those laws have done a lot to undermine what little revolutionary spirit the Mexican workers formerly possessed. Strikes have no longer the revolutionary character they have in other countries. Here they have become the subject of legal pettifoggery and hair splitting on the part of the tribunals which now decide the destinies of the workers."

"The government has for some time now been engaged in a campaign for "socialism" To get an idea of the kind of socialism we are getting, one must bear in mind certain elementary facts. Mexico has a population of about 16 million, out of which 13 million have no property whatsoever. On the other hand we have cabinet officers, presidents and ex-presidents who own numerous estates, factories and enterprises of all kinds. For instance, the present State Secretary of Agriculture, Garrido Canabal, the ex-governor of the State of Tabasco, according to whose demagogic statements socialism has already been planted in this country, is the owner of 14 estates and one of the principle stockholders of the major industry of his state. Another good example of the socialistic character of the government is Aledardo Rodriguez, the author of the famous "minimum wage" (a peso and a half a day), who pays the workers of his numerous enterprises less than this minimum scale. This is no isolated case but rather one of the many abounding in the life of our country.

The labor movement of Mexico is almost totally absorbed by the political elements. All of the labor organizations, with the exception of the local Federation of Workers of Mexico, D. F. (consisting of several revolutionary unions which adhere to the principles of the First International) are imbued with the reformist spirit of the purest kind. The organizations in which comrades

are doing work are the following: The General Confederation of Workers and Peasants of Mexico, the General Confederation of Workers, The National Chambers of Labor, The Confederation of Electrical Workers, The Union of Railway Workers, The Federation of Printers, and the peasant organizations. All those organizations are broken up into various groupings and are swamped by politicians.

The influence of anarcho-syndicalism is limited, being confined to individuals who fight within the above mentioned organizations. Up to now they have not yet succeeded in attaining any commanding influence. The only organization of a definite anarcho-syndicalist character is the local Federation of the City of Mexico. This is the only organization endeavoring to unite all the groups and individuals of our tendency.

The Spanish anarchist movement has not yet impressed itself on the labor movement of Mexico. The anarchists here are beginning to wake up and are devoting a good deal of attention to the Spanish situation. The Communists are of course, divided into factions, all currying for the favor of the government and exercising a very small influence on the whole. Fascism exists in a latent state without, however, having enough active power to become a threatening force at the present moment.

CANADA

Canada is waking up. Strikes are taking place everywhere. The single men in the "slave camps" (relief camps) were recently on strike at Vancouver. In Newfoundland rioting has taken place among the unemployed.

The most encouraging feature of the longshoremen's strike in Montreal, which tied up shipping for several days, was the rejection by the rank and file of the first agreement which their leaders made with the shipping companies. The men dictated their own terms and won. Among the miners and lumber workers the I. W. W. is gaining steady ground.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is no longer limited to the North-west, but now covers the whole dominion. The government is spending enormous funds on these "storm troopers" as an effective instrument in suppressing the working class movement.

D. G. — Toronto.

"DEMOCRACY" IN THE U. S. S. R.

One of the fundamental tests of any democracy is the degree to which the communal budget is subject to the control of the community as a whole. To a great extent modern political democracies owe their origin to the struggle waged over the control of the raising and spending of public money.

That should be of still greater importance in a socialist eco-

nomy in which the scope of the public budget becomes enormously enlarged. And if it is true that the social order of the U. S. S. R. is rapidly approaching the state of a true social democracy, we should see an ever greater extension of public control over the state budget, which in that country absorbs almost the entire national income (97.5% thereof). It stands to reason that the question of what the state does with 97.5% of the national income is incomparably more vital to the average worker than what it does with 10% thereof (the aggregate of the Federal, state and city budgets of the U. S. equals 10% of the national income). The workers who produce the national income are certainly entitled to know beforehand how this income is going to be redistributed by the state: how much of it is going to be spent on their immediate needs, how much for those of a remote kind, how much for capital investments and their efficacy in terms of immediate returns.

Let us see, for instance, how the national income of the U. S. S. R. is being redistributed this year and how vitally that affects the life of the workers. Fifty-five percent of the budget is put back into the national economy. Thirty-three percent of such outlays are of the kind the effects of which will be felt only after the elapse of a considerable period of time. Now, regardless of the question whether such an outlay (about a third of the national income) is warranted or not by the demands of the national economy, it is clear that the workers should be consulted about it to some degree. After all it is they who will have to do the belt-tightening in case the balance tips over too strongly on the side of capital investments. The same holds true about the cost of the governmental apparatus which in the U. S. S. R. reaches the respectable size of 6% of the total budget; or about outlays for defense, increased four-fold over that of last year and now totaling 11% of the budget.

How well was the Soviet public opinion prepared for the budget? Were any preliminary drafts published, were there any criticisms of the project made and publicly discussed? Was there any attempt made to solicit the opinion of the great mass of workers on how to redistribute the national income into various channels, to incorporate such opinion to some extent in the final draft of the budget?

Not only was such preliminary discussion lacking, but the adoption of the budget took place under conditions nearly approaching those of state secrets. The discussions taking place on it in the Central Executive Committee were held behind closed doors, while the reports carried about them in the newspapers were of the most meagre kind, being confined to a few inconspicuous lines.

The workers of the U. S. S. R. will, of course, learn in time of how their income is being disposed, but not before the budget will have been accepted and acted upon. And of what use are

the little scraps of information obtained through garbled reports and diluted propaganda talks if they do not serve the only purpose mass education along those lines has to fulfill -and that is to form an enlightened public opinion capable of asserting the collective will of the great masses of people on the fundamental problems of social life?

"For theirs is not to question why"—that remains true of the producers of wealth in the U. S. S. R. as well as of the capitalist countries.

S—X

Making a Comeback

For several years now, in fact almost from the time that the Communist International called for the liquidation of the I. W. W. many radicals have been busily throwing dirt in an effort to effect a premature burial for that valiant organization. Humorously enough, the Communists, with principles widely separating them from the I. W. W., have repeatedly proclaimed themselves as the inheritors of the Wobbly tradition.

It must have proved quite annoying to these communists to witness, not just a spurt of activity, but numerous large strikes in Cleveland under the leadership of the I. W. W. And contrary to the opinions of the Workers' Party, as stated in the *New Militant*, these strikes proved that the organization could still capture the imagination of thousands of militant workers. For many years the labor movement has lacked an organization that could take advantage of the growing radicalization of the masses and not lead it into reformist channels. The I. W. W. today has a mission which the A. F. of L. can never fulfill even with all the progressives which the communists hope to elect into the bureaucracy of the organization. It may be easier to elect progressives to leadership than to build a new labor movement, but this is by no means a substitute for Revolutionary Industrial Unionism.

Thus we are watching the developments in Cleveland with keen interest. The I. W. W. has selected a strategic point in which to start. Cleveland is at the center of a huge industrial area and is also a key position in an attack upon the automobile industry of Detroit. Coming to Cleveland a year ago, the I. W. W. has won strikes involving thousands of workers. Its revolutionary principles, its rank and file control and democratic methods of organization has roused hope and admiration to such an extent that a strike of charwomen there under its leadership has continued now since Dec. 12th!

All these strikes have been accompanied by severe violence on the part of the employers. Violence has been entirely out of proportion to the interests at stake. Bombings, sluggings and arrests are taking place daily. It seems, as a columnist of a Cleve-

land paper has put it, that industry is not so much concerned about unionization as it is about the rebirth of the I. W. W., especially in the highly important machine industry of Cleveland.

"Is this a comeback?" asks the Workers Party. It then proceeds to explain that the I. W. W. is not in harmony with present day trends, that history has shown that unionism outside of the A. F. of L. is doomed to failure, and that they cannot dream of supporting dual unionism. Either these people are blind or they are pure opportunists. If history has proven anything, it has at least shown that the A. F. of L. is incapable of being reformed, and that only too often this noble organization represents capitalist interests instead of workers. At the present time, more than than ever before, the working class in America is showing a willingness to fight, to join organizations outside of the A. F. of L. and to be appreciative of radical propaganda. The opportunity placed before the I. W. W. today is tremendous. With the collapse of the NRA. Revolutionary Industrial Unionism has the field broken open for it to organize millions of disgusted workers of America.

R. W.

The New Inquisition

The deportation proceedings against two Italian comrades, Vincent Ferrero and Dominick Sallitto, charged with publishing the anarchist paper "Man!" of San Francisco is much more ominous a phenomenon of our political life than it may appear on the surface. Coupled with a systematic effort on the part of the authorities to terrorize and intimidate the readers and subscribers of that magazine, it appears to be a part of the general campaign of our would-be liberal government to deprive the anarchist movement of the last shred of civic rights still enabling it to function openly. A few more blows of that kind and a movement rooted deeply in American traditions, and the very spirit which went to make the best there is in American history, will be altogether driven underground.

Against this renewal of the infamous Palmer policies, which, by the way, were also instituted by a "liberal" government, every liberty loving man must raise his voice of protest. Thus far the liberal and radical world (this holds true of the anarchists as well) has been too remiss in the defense of the civic rights of anarchists. It is too often forgotten that it was the laws directed against the anarchists that became the opening wedge in the general curtailment of civic liberties pursued by the government since that period.

The fight against the deportation of the two Italian comrades should not be left to anarchists only. A general campaign of protest based on the common efforts of the radical and liberal

world should be instituted immediately. As wide a mass support should be created for it as possible. Mass meetings, resolutions of protest, collections of money, the aid of sympathetic trade unions should be undertaken immediately. It is a fight for the general principles of liberty, for the defense of a haunted and persecuted movement, for the rights of the foreign born to a minimum of human rights among which must be included the one to hold an opinion as to the political and economic future of humanity. It is a fight against the rising wave of fascism and as such it should be embraced by every progressive man and woman of America.



The Libertarian Groups

The activity of various libertarian groups of the younger generation throughout the country seems to be increasing. Prospects for organization in *Boston* was reported by comrade Weiner who recently came back from a trip during which he spoke at Wellesley College, East Boston and Needham. With a little effort the New England states could be dotted with groups.... The *South Side Libertarian Group of Chicago* has been carrying on work among the students of the University of Chicago which is bound to tell in future growth of the group. The recent Anti-war strike found them in the front ranks.... The *Toronto Libertarian Group* is unfolding a series of activities. They have printed a manifesto "Against War and Fascism" which they distributed at the May Day parades in that city. They have also started a campaign to reprint Alexander Berkman's "A. B. C. of Communist Anarchism", for which they are collecting funds. ... Back in New York the *Vanguard Group*, besides concentrating almost all of its energies in raising funds for, and publishing a magazine which it hopes to make an outstanding publication, has been conducting programmatic discussions with many outsiders regularly attending. It has been sending speakers to various places out of town and in the city. An increase of membership proves such activity to be of value....

These reports of activities are, indeed small. But they show a beginning. It is up to the younger generation of anarchists to carry on their work untiringly, to restore the movement to that place it held some years ago and carry it forward to its revolutionary goal. Through activity and a proper realization of the problems of our movement, the youth can rebuild the meager forces which have been left to us.

Book Review

"The State in Theory and Practice" by HAROLD LASKI.

There was a time when the appearance of a new book by Harold Laski constituted an event in the realm of political science. Written in the spirit of profound, analytical inquiry, backed up by an immense store of learning in the cognate branches of knowledge, each and every new book contributed something new to the vast field of theoretical speculation centering around the pivotal problems of political science such as the problem of Sovereignty, General Will, the nature of political obligations, State and Society. Those contributions were the greater that they followed the general line of progressive political thought of two decades ago, which, by deepening the implications of the liberal doctrine of the 19th Century and applying them to a critical revision of the basic concepts of political science in the light of the newly accumulated store of historical knowledge, succeeded in building up a new system of political ideas of vast seminal import to the constructive movements of the coming revolutionary epoch.

It would therefore be in line with the past achievements of Harold Laski's former work to expect new, revealing ideas in a book which, judging by its title and its preface, was to come as a fruition of a long series of inquiries into and reflections upon the problem of the state. Unfortunately, Mr. Laski seems to be caught up now with a wave of enthusiasm for the Marxist doctrine, embraced not in the course of scientific searchings, but in the emotional way of many a modern intellectual who is impelled toward this doctrine of supposedly rich revolutionary connotations by a new sense of revolutionary duty brought to life by the German catastrophe.

But whatever the nature of the revolutionary connotations of the Marxist doctrine might be, they are certainly sterile in the field of political science. And no one should be more aware of it than Laski himself who kept on stressing what he regarded the central point of his doctrines, namely that a philosophy of political obligations must rest upon the recognition of the validity of some kind of natural law. Differing from the idealists in the denial of the possibility of building up an a priori system of natural law, he was led to accept the anarchist position of lodging with the individual conscience the supreme criterion of such systems.

It is, however, rather difficult to harmonize such a position with the rejection of natural law and the criterion of individual conscience constituting an integral part of the Marxist doctrine. Certainly Mr. Laski is well acquainted with Plekhanov's violent criticism of the natural law idea in his pamphlet directed against anarchism, or with the similar strictures upon this idea to be found in Engels' capital work *"Anti-Duhring"*. Nor can any amount of mental acrobatics succeed in camouflaging the essential identity of

Marxism and Hegelianism in their attempt to equate the real and rational, against which idea Mr. Laski directed so much of his critical fire.

To the credit of Laski it must, however, be said that no such mental jugglery was attempted in his latest book. We don't see there any attempt to integrate the Marxist doctrine into his system of ideas with the help of sophistry so frequently employed by men like Prof. Sidney Hook. Both systems remain isolated and detached from each other. The first part of the book is written in the spirit of his former original inquiries, embodying a brilliant critical analysis of the various doctrines of the State, and is richly interspersed with a number of seminal ideas suggesting a constructive approach to a new political theory. And by way of an anti-climax we have the second part representing but a second-hand popularization of the Marxist doctrine of the State, which, stretched as it might be, cannot give any more than the establishing of a functional relation between the political and economic spheres of social life.

It is not an altogether fitting climax to the vast work of theoretical analysis and conscientious groping of new principles of political science undertaken in the past by Mr. Laski. Functional relations cannot take the place of natural law and individual conscience. And if the mere logic of his own basic ideas is not compelling enough for Mr. Laski, the experience of U. S. S. R., with the impasse reached in its political life as a result of ignoring these basic ideas, should clinch the matter for our author.

For, as Mr. Laski formulated it in his own felicitous manner, "the framework of fact cannot of itself make just law", and a theory that reverses this relationship cannot be anything but a mere passing infatuation on the part of an outstanding libertarian thinker like Harold Laski.

—S.X.

● **Financial Statement**

February 17, 1935 to May 28, 1935

Total Income	\$77.49
Total Expenditures	43.54
Balance	\$33.95

RECAPITULATION:

Deficit February 17, 1935	\$52.27
Balance for period	33.95
Deficit May 28, 1935	\$18.32

W. EDWARDS,
Financial Secretary.

Where We Stand

When the first issue of the "Vanguard" was published several months ago in multigraphed form, we stated that within a short time it would appear as a printed magazine. We have been able to keep this promise only because of the support given by our readers. But the funds thus far received can in no way guarantee the future regular appearance of the "Vanguard". The deficit after this issue is out will greatly exceed the figures shown in our financial report.

Comrades, you are all aware of the obvious necessity of a publication of this type in our movement. But, (and this is perhaps what some comrades may not realize) we cannot print a magazine regularly unless we get regular monthly contributions from our comrades and readers and unless the magazine is the result of the combined efforts of the various groups in the movement.

All groups and individuals interested in seeing "Vanguard" appear regularly and grow should allocate every month, starting now, a definite sum to be used for defraying the expenses of the publication. This is especially important during the summer months when it is difficult to raise money. Send in your contributions now!

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